

Witness Testimony

To: Chair
Human Services
From: James Gustafson
Date: January 5, 2007
RE: Comments on Peer Support

EXHIBIT 16
DATE 1-10-07
HB 2

Madam Chair,

My name is James Gustafson and I live at 625 5th Ave. S. Great Falls. I am a consumer, a certified Peer Support Specialist, the administrative assistant, Interim Director of the Peer Support Project and a member of the Peer Oversight Committee. I am also a member of the Great Falls Mental Health Association of Board of Directors. I also volunteer at Opening Doors, which helps people to ease the transition from incarceration to society.

The committee was started in October 2005, the project was developed by the Crisis Peer Support Planning and Implementation Committee, who is a collaboration of consumers, family members, GTCMHC staff, and other interested individuals. The project received the support of the Great Falls Local Advisory Council.

They applied for a grant through AMDD and in January 2006, the applied for a grant of \$165000.00 to fund the project.

On September 11, 2006, the Crisis Peer Support Pilot Project Planning & Implementation Committee, held its Crisis Peer Support Pilot Project Recovery Conference. It was the Planning & Implementation Committees intent is to make everyone aware of why and how this service can complement existing mental health services in both urban and rural areas. Their vision was and is that it could be replicated and modified to be used in communities across the whole state.

We have held three Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) classes, with 32 people who have attended these classes. These classes consist of a two day courses, that are taught by a Wellness Recovery Action Plan facilitator, from the Copeland Center for Wellness and Recovery.

We have had one Peer Support Specialist training class. All 12 of the people who completed the October 2-13, Peer Support Specialist training class have been certified as Peer Support Specialists through META in Phoenix Arizona. This class was taught by Chris Martin, M.A. ED & ED. COUNSELING, who is the Director of Training and Consultation Recovery Opportunity Center for META Services Inc. in Phoenix Arizona. This was a very intensive two week class with the equivalency to 3 college credits.

On December 8, 2006, we have hired six peer support specialists, who are working with the Case Managers at the Center for Mental Health in Great Falls. As of today, we have had nine referrals, from the Case Managers at the Center for Mental Health. Those referrals consisted of thoughts of suicide, domestic and medical problems.

We have also had two crisis referrals that, after talking to the Peer Specialist, have been doing very well and not in crisis or have had to be hospitalized at this time. The average time of contact has been about 1.5 hrs

It has been very rewarding to see the hopes and dreams of the Mental Health Center Foundation and the Oversight Committee develop into a workable and functional community based program that can be replicated in all the communities of Montana.